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(54) **PROPULSION CONTROL ARRANGEMENT, ROBOTIC TOOL, METHOD OF PROPELLING
ROBOTIC TOOL AND RELATED DEVICES**

ANTRIEBSSTEUERUNGSANORDNUNG, ROBOTERWERKZEUG, VERFAHREN ZUM ANTREIBEN
DES ROBOTERWERKZEUGS UND ZUGEHÖRIGE VORRICHTUNGEN

AGENCEMENT DE CONTRÔLE DE PROPULSION, OUTIL ROBOTIQUE, PROCÉDÉ DE
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Description

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001] The present disclosure relates to a propulsion control arrangement for a self-propelled robotic lawnmower. The present disclosure further relates to a self-propelled robotic lawnmower, such as a self-propelled robotic lawnmower, a method of propelling a self-propelled robotic lawnmower, a computer program, and a computer-readable medium.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Self-propelled robotic tools, such as self-propelled autonomous robotic lawnmowers, have become increasingly popular, partly because they usually are capable of performing work which previously was made manually. A self-propelled robotic tool is capable of navigating in an area in an autonomous manner, i.e. without the intervention of a user. The robotic tool may move in a systematic and/or random pattern to ensure that the area is completely covered. Some robotic tools require a user to set up a border wire around an area that defines the area to be operated by the robotic tool. Such robotic tools use a sensor to locate the wire and thereby the boundary of the area to be operated. When such a robotic tool reaches the border wire, the robotic tool is usually stopped and then operated in a direction opposite to the direction of travel that the robotic tool had at the time of the detection of the boundary wire.

[0003] As an alternative, or in addition, robotic tools may comprise other types of positioning units and sensors, for example sensors for detecting an event, such as a collision with an object within the area. Similarly, when a collision with an object is detected, the robotic tool is usually stopped and then operated in a direction opposite to the direction of travel that the robotic tool had at the time of the detection of the collision.

[0004] One problem associated with robotic tools is wear and tear of the area operated by the robotic tool. As an example, wheel slip of one or more wheels of the robotic tool may cause unwanted marks in the area operated by the robotic tool. Moreover, many areas comprise more or less slopes which may pose problems for the traction and navigability of the robotic tool, especially in wet conditions. Problems for the traction and navigability of the robotic tool may adversely affect the coverage of an area operated by a robotic tool. In addition, the presence of slopes in an area operated may significantly increase the probability of unwanted marks in the area due to an increased risk for wheel slip.

[0005] Moreover, generally, on today's consumer market, it is an advantage if products, such as robotic tools and their associated devices, have conditions and/or characteristics suitable for being developed and manufactured in a cost-efficient manner.

[0006] The document US 2012159916 A1 relates to a

control system for an engineless, motor-driven lawnmower vehicle including electric motors and controllers. At least one of the electric motors is an electric drive motor connected to a drive wheel of the lawnmower vehicle to enable transmission of motive power. At least one other electric motor is a mower-related electric motor connected to a lawnmower rotary tool to enable transmission of motive power. At least one of the controllers is a drive wheel controller which includes a drive wheel driver and which controls operation of the electric drive motor in response to a signal from at least one operator sensor for detecting an operation amount of at least one operator. At least one controller controls to activate or stop the mower-related electric motor. At least one controller is connected to the drive wheel controller and transmits a control signal thereto in response to a signal from the operator sensor.

[0007] The document WO 2017/198222 A1 relates to a self-moving device comprising a housing, said housing comprising a longitudinal axis, the directions of the two ends of said longitudinal axis defining a first extension direction and a second extension direction. The self-moving device comprises a movement module comprising tracks and a control module for controlling the movement module.

SUMMARY

[0008] It is an object of the present invention to overcome, or at least alleviate, at least some of the above-mentioned problems and drawbacks.

[0009] According to a first aspect of the invention, the object is achieved by a propulsion control arrangement for a self-propelled robotic lawnmower, wherein the robotic lawnmower comprises at least one swivel caster wheel configured to abut against a ground surface during operation of the robotic lawnmower. The control arrangement is configured to, upon detection of a stop event of the robotic lawnmower after travel in a first longitudinal direction of the robotic lawnmower, turn the robotic lawnmower a predetermined angle, and then initiate propulsion in a second longitudinal direction of the robotic lawnmower being opposite to the first longitudinal direction.

[0010] A swivel caster wheel is a wheel pivotally attached to the robotic lawnmower around a pivot axis, wherein the pivot axis is arranged at a distance from a wheel axle of the swivel caster wheel, and wherein the pivot axis is substantially perpendicular to the ground surface. Such a wheel is free to pivot around the pivot axis such that a rolling direction of the wheel can follow a travel direction of the robotic lawnmower. A swivel caster wheel has a first rotational direction in which it is intended to rotate. Due to these features, upon detection of a stop event of the robotic lawnmower after travel in a first longitudinal direction of the robotic lawnmower, the rolling direction of the swivel caster wheel will be parallel to the first longitudinal direction and the wheel axle of the swivel caster wheel will be behind the pivot axis seen in the first

longitudinal direction.

[0011] As realized by the inventor of the present disclosure, problems arise when the swivel caster wheel is in this position and propulsion is initiated in a second longitudinal direction of the robotic lawnmower being opposite to the first longitudinal direction. This because the swivel caster wheel will start to rotate in a second rotational direction opposite to the first rotational direction and will start to pivot in an uncontrolled manner around the pivot axis. The pivoting direction of the swivel caster wheel is highly random and usually cannot be foreseen. The wheel axle of the swivel caster wheel will thus rotate relative to the second longitudinal direction and at a certain moment, when the wheel axle has passed the point in which the wheel axle is parallel to the second longitudinal direction, the swivel caster wheel will start to rotate in the first rotational direction. As a result thereof, high forces are transferred to the robotic lawnmower from the ground engaging contact between the ground and the swivel caster wheel. These high forces result in unexpected changes in travel direction of the robotic lawnmower. Moreover, these high forces provide resistance in the second longitudinal direction of the robotic lawnmower which makes propulsion in the second longitudinal direction more difficult and therefore increases the risk of wheel slip and impairs the slope performance of the robotic lawnmower.

[0012] However, since the control arrangement according to the present disclosure is configured to turn the robotic lawnmower a predetermined angle before initiating propulsion in the second longitudinal direction, the at least one swivel caster wheel is pivoted to a position in which the rolling direction of the at least one swivel caster wheel is transversal to the second longitudinal direction. As a result thereof, propulsion can be initiated in the second longitudinal direction with less resistance in the second longitudinal direction and with a reduced risk of unexpected changes in travel direction of the robotic lawnmower.

[0013] Accordingly, a control arrangement is provided capable of reducing wear and tear of an area operated in a simple and cost efficient manner. This because propulsion can be initiated in the second longitudinal direction with less resistance in the second longitudinal direction thereby reducing the risk of wheel slip of drive wheels of the robotic lawnmower, which can reduce wear and tear of the ground surface caused by drive wheels of the robotic lawnmower. Moreover, the controlled turning of the robotic lawnmower and of the swivel caster wheel may reduce the wear and tear obtained from the contact between the ground surface and the swivel caster wheel. Furthermore, a control arrangement is provided capable of reducing uneven wear and tear of the area operated by the robotic lawnmower by reducing wear and tear of the ground surface around objects which causes stop events, such as for example trees, stumps, and boundary wires.

[0014] Moreover, a control arrangement is provided

having conditions for obtaining an improved coverage of an area operated by a robotic lawnmower. This because a reduced risk of wheel slip is obtained which in turn reduces the risk of unexpected changes in travel direction of the robotic lawnmower. Furthermore, the risk of unexpected changes in travel direction of the robotic lawnmower is reduced due to the reduced forces transferred to the robotic lawnmower from the contact between the ground surface and the swivel caster wheel. In addition, due to the turning of the robotic lawnmower, the swivel caster wheel is pivoted in a known pivoting direction which further reduces the risk of unexpected changes in travel direction of the robotic lawnmower.

[0015] Furthermore, since propulsion can be initiated in the second longitudinal direction with less resistance in the second longitudinal direction, the slope performance of the robotic lawnmower is improved. As a further result thereof, the control arrangement provides conditions for increasing the size of an area operated by the robotic lawnmower, for example by positioning boundary wires further down in slopes.

[0016] Accordingly, a control arrangement is provided overcoming, or at least alleviating, at least some of the above-mentioned problems and drawbacks. As a result, the above-mentioned object is achieved.

[0017] Optionally, the predetermined angle is within the range of 2 degrees to 40 degrees, or is within the range of 10 degrees to 30 degrees. Thereby, it is ensured that the at least one swivel caster wheel is pivoted to a position in which the rolling direction of the at least one swivel caster wheel is transversal to the second longitudinal direction. In this manner, it can be ensured that less resistance is obtained in the second longitudinal direction upon propulsion of the robotic lawnmower in the second longitudinal direction.

[0018] Optionally, the control arrangement is configured to turn the robotic lawnmower the predetermined angle around a yaw axis of the robotic lawnmower. Thereby, conditions are provided for turning the robotic lawnmower small predetermined angles and still obtain a pivoting angle of the swivel caster wheel sufficient for reducing the resistance in the second longitudinal direction upon propulsion of the robotic lawnmower in the second longitudinal direction.

[0019] Optionally, the control arrangement is configured to determine a current inclination angle of the robotic lawnmower, and is configured to turn the robotic lawnmower the predetermined angle only if the current inclination angle is greater than a threshold inclination angle. Thereby, the control arrangement will perform the turning of the robotic lawnmower when it is most needed and in cases where the risk for wheel slip of drive wheels of the robotic lawnmower is high.

[0020] According to a second aspect of the invention, the object is achieved by a self-propelled robotic lawnmower comprising:

- at least one swivel caster wheel configured to abut

against a ground surface during operation of the robotic lawnmower, and

- a propulsion control arrangement configured to, upon detection of a stop event of the robotic lawnmower after travel in a first longitudinal direction, turn the robotic lawnmower a predetermined angle, and then initiate propulsion in a second longitudinal direction being opposite to the first longitudinal direction.

[0021] Since the propulsion control arrangement of the robotic lawnmower is configured to turn the robotic lawnmower a predetermined angle before initiating propulsion in the second longitudinal direction, the at least one swivel caster wheel is pivoted to a position in which the rolling direction of the at least one swivel caster wheel is transversal to the second longitudinal direction. As a result thereof, propulsion can be initiated in the second longitudinal direction with less resistance in the second longitudinal direction and with a reduced risk of unexpected changes in travel direction of the robotic lawnmower.

[0022] Accordingly, a robotic lawnmower is provided capable of reducing wear and tear of an area operated in a simple and cost efficient manner. This because propulsion can be initiated in the second longitudinal direction with less resistance in the second longitudinal direction thereby reducing the risk of wheel slip of drive wheels of the robotic lawnmower, which can reduce wear and tear of the ground surface caused by drive wheels of the robotic lawnmower. Moreover, the controlled turning of the robotic lawnmower and of the swivel caster wheel may reduce the wear and tear obtained from the contact between the ground surface and the swivel caster wheel. Furthermore, a robotic lawnmower is provided capable of reducing uneven wear and tear of the area operated by the robotic lawnmower by reducing wear and tear of the ground surface around objects which causes stop events, such as for example trees, stumps, and boundary wires.

[0023] Moreover, a robotic lawnmower is provided having conditions for obtaining an improved coverage of an area operated by a robotic lawnmower. This because a reduced risk of wheel slip is obtained which in turn reduces the risk of unexpected changes in travel direction of the robotic lawnmower. Furthermore, the risk of unexpected changes in travel direction of the robotic lawnmower is reduced due to the reduced forces transferred to the robotic lawnmower from the contact between the ground surface and the swivel caster wheel. In addition, due to the turning of the robotic lawnmower, the swivel caster wheel is pivoted in a known pivoting direction which further reduces the risk of unexpected changes in travel direction of the robotic lawnmower.

[0024] Furthermore, since propulsion can be initiated in the second longitudinal direction with less resistance in the second longitudinal direction, the slope performance of the robotic lawnmower is improved. As a further result thereof, the robotic lawnmower provides conditions for increasing the size of an area operated by the robotic

lawnmower, for example by positioning boundary wires further down in slopes.

[0025] Accordingly, a robotic lawnmower is provided overcoming, or at least alleviating, at least some of the above-mentioned problems and drawbacks. As a result, the above-mentioned object is achieved.

[0026] Optionally, the robotic lawnmower further comprises:

- a first drive wheel, and
- a second drive wheel,

and wherein the propulsion control arrangement is configured to control propulsion of the robotic lawnmower by controlling rotation of the first and second drive wheels.

[0027] Thereby, propulsion of the robotic lawnmower can be controlled in a simple and efficient manner. Moreover, the robotic lawnmower can be turned the predetermined angle in a simple and efficient manner so as to ensure pivoting of the swivel caster wheel.

[0028] Optionally, the propulsion control arrangement is configured to turn the robotic lawnmower the predetermined angle by rotating the first and second drive wheels in opposite rotational directions. Thereby, the robotic lawnmower can be turned the predetermined angle in a simple and efficient manner so as to ensure pivoting of the swivel caster wheel. Moreover, conditions are provided for turning the robotic lawnmower small predetermined angles and still obtain a pivoting angle of the swivel caster wheel sufficient for reducing the resistance in the second longitudinal direction upon propulsion of the robotic lawnmower in the second longitudinal direction.

[0029] Optionally, the robotic lawnmower comprises a sensor arranged to sense a current inclination angle of the robotic lawnmower, and wherein the propulsion control arrangement is configured to turn the robotic lawnmower the predetermined angle only if the current inclination angle is greater than a threshold inclination angle. Thereby, the control arrangement will perform the turning of the robotic lawnmower when it is most needed and in cases where the risk for wheel slip of drive wheels of the robotic lawnmower is high.

[0030] According to a third aspect of the invention, the object is achieved by a method of propelling a self-propelled robotic lawnmower comprising at least one swivel caster wheel configured to abut against a ground surface during operation of the robotic lawnmower, wherein the method comprises the steps of:

- detecting a stop event of the robotic lawnmower after travel in a first longitudinal direction of the robotic lawnmower,
- turning the robotic lawnmower a predetermined angle to turn the at least one swivel caster wheel to a position in which a respective rolling direction of the at least one swivel caster wheel is transversal to a second longitudinal direction being opposite to the first longitudinal direction, and then

- initiating propulsion in the second longitudinal direction.

[0031] Since the method comprises the step of turning the robotic lawnmower before initiating propulsion in the second longitudinal direction, the at least one swivel caster wheel is pivoted to a position in which the rolling direction of the at least one swivel caster wheel is transversal to the second longitudinal direction. As a result thereof, propulsion can be initiated in the second longitudinal direction with less resistance in the second longitudinal direction and with a reduced risk of unexpected changes in travel direction of the robotic lawnmower.

[0032] Accordingly, a method is provided capable of reducing wear and tear of an area operated in a simple and cost efficient manner. This because propulsion can be initiated in the second longitudinal direction with less resistance in the second longitudinal direction thereby reducing the risk of wheel slip of drive wheels of the robotic lawnmower, which can reduce wear and tear of the ground surface caused by drive wheels of the robotic lawnmower. Moreover, the controlled turning of the robotic lawnmower and of the swivel caster wheel may reduce the wear and tear obtained from the contact between the ground surface and the swivel caster wheel. Furthermore, a method is provided capable of reducing uneven wear and tear of the area operated by the robotic lawnmower by reducing wear and tear of the ground surface around objects which causes stop events, such as for example trees, stumps, and boundary wires.

[0033] Moreover, a method is provided having conditions for obtaining an improved coverage of an area operated by a robotic lawnmower. This because a reduced risk of wheel slip is obtained which in turn reduces the risk of unexpected changes in travel direction of the robotic lawnmower. Furthermore, the risk of unexpected changes in travel direction of the robotic lawnmower is reduced due to the reduced forces transferred to the robotic lawnmower from the contact between the ground surface and the swivel caster wheel. In addition, due to the turning of the robotic lawnmower, the swivel caster wheel is pivoted in a known pivoting direction which further reduces the risk of unexpected changes in travel direction of the robotic lawnmower.

[0034] Furthermore, since propulsion can be initiated in the second longitudinal direction with less resistance in the second longitudinal direction, the slope performance of the robotic lawnmower is improved. As a further result thereof, the method provides conditions for increasing the size of an area operated by the robotic lawnmower, for example by positioning boundary wires further down in slopes.

[0035] Accordingly, a method is provided overcoming, or at least alleviating, at least some of the above-mentioned problems and drawbacks. As a result, the above-mentioned object is achieved.

[0036] Optionally, the method comprises the steps of:

- determining a current inclination angle of the robotic lawnmower, and wherein the method comprises:
- performing the step of turning the robotic lawnmower the predetermined angle only if the current inclination angle is greater than a threshold inclination angle.

[0037] Thereby, the step of turning the robotic lawnmower is performed when it is most needed and in cases where the risk for wheel slip of drive wheels of the robotic lawnmower is high.

[0038] Optionally, the threshold inclination angle is within the range of 1.5 degrees to 7 degrees, or is within the range of 2 degrees to 5 degrees.

[0039] Thereby, the step of turning the robotic lawnmower is performed when it is most needed and in cases where the risk for wheel slip of drive wheels of the robotic lawnmower is high.

[0040] According to a fourth aspect of the invention, the object is achieved by a computer program comprising instructions which, when the program is executed by a computer, cause the computer to carry out the method according to some embodiments of the present disclosure. Since the computer program comprises instructions which, when the program is executed by a computer, cause the computer to carry out the method according to some embodiments, a computer program is provided which provides conditions for overcoming, or at least alleviating, at least some of the above-mentioned drawbacks. As a result, the above-mentioned object is achieved.

[0041] According to a fifth aspect of the invention, the object is achieved by a computer-readable medium comprising instructions which, when executed by a computer, cause the computer to carry out the method according to some embodiments of the present disclosure. Since the computer-readable medium comprises instructions which, when executed by a computer, cause the computer to carry out the method according to some embodiments, a computer-readable medium is provided which provides conditions for overcoming, or at least alleviating, at least some of the above-mentioned drawbacks. As a result, the above-mentioned object is achieved.

[0042] Further features of, and advantages with, the present invention will become apparent when studying the appended claims and the following detailed description.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0043] Various aspects of the invention, including its particular features and advantages, will be readily understood from the example embodiments discussed in the following detailed description and the accompanying drawings, in which:

Fig. 1 illustrates a perspective view of a self-propelled robotic lawnmower, according to some embodiments,

Fig. 2 illustrates a first side view of the robotic lawnmower according to the embodiments illustrated in Fig. 1,

Fig. 3 illustrates a second side view of the robotic lawnmower according to the embodiments illustrated in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2,

Fig. 4a - Fig. 4d illustrate the robotic lawnmower according to the embodiments illustrated in Fig. 1 - Fig. 3 at four different positions relative to a boundary wire,

Fig. 5 schematically illustrates a first top view of the swivel caster wheel according to the embodiments illustrated in Fig. 1 - Fig. 3,

Fig. 6 schematically illustrates a second top view of the swivel caster wheel according to the embodiments illustrated in Fig. 1 - Fig. 3,

Fig. 7 schematically illustrates a third top view of the swivel caster wheel according to the embodiments illustrated in Fig. 1 - Fig. 3,

Fig. 8 illustrates a self-propelled autonomous robotic lawnmower, according to some further embodiments,

Fig. 9 illustrates a method of propelling a self-propelled robotic lawnmower, and

Fig. 10 illustrates computer-readable medium.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0044] Aspects of the present invention will now be described more fully. Like numbers refer to like elements throughout. Well-known functions or constructions will not necessarily be described in detail for brevity and/or clarity.

[0045] Fig. 1 illustrates a perspective view of a self-propelled autonomous robotic lawnmower 3, according to some embodiments. According to the illustrated embodiments, the self-propelled robotic lawnmower 3 is a self-propelled autonomous robotic lawnmower 3 capable of cutting grass in an area in an autonomous manner, i.e. without the intervention of a user. According to the illustrated embodiments, the robotic lawnmower 3 is configured to be used to cut grass in areas used for aesthetic and recreational purposes, such as gardens, parks, city parks, sports fields, lawns around houses, apartments, commercial buildings, offices, and the like.

[0046] For the reason of brevity and clarity, the self-propelled robotic lawnmower 3 is in some places herein referred to as "the robotic lawnmower 3".

[0047] According to the illustrated embodiments, the robotic lawnmower 3 comprises a first and a second drive wheel 9, 9'. The drive wheels 9, 9' may also be referred to as propulsion wheels 9, 9'. In Fig. 1, only the second drive wheel 9' is visible. Moreover, according to the embodiments illustrated in Fig. 1, the robotic lawnmower 3 comprises two swivel caster wheels 5, 5' each configured to abut against a ground surface 7 during operation of the robotic lawnmower 3. The swivel caster wheels 5, 5' are non-driven wheels each configured to support the

robotic lawnmower 3 during operation thereof. Moreover, according to the illustrated embodiments, the two swivel caster wheels 5, 5' constitute front wheels and the first and second drive wheels 9, 9' constitute rear wheels of the robotic lawnmower 3. The first and second drive wheels 9, 9' are driven by a respective propulsion motor which may be powered by electricity from a battery comprised in the robotic lawnmower 3. These propulsion motors and the battery are not illustrated in Fig. 1 for the reason of brevity and clarity.

[0048] According to the embodiments illustrated in Fig. 1, the robotic lawnmower 3 comprises four wheels and may be referred to as a four-wheeled rear wheel driven robotic lawnmower 3. The robotic lawnmower 3 may be provided with another number of wheels 5, 5', 9, 9' and another configuration of driven and non-driven wheels than depicted in Fig. 1, as is further explained herein.

[0049] The robotic lawnmower 3 comprises a propulsion control arrangement 1. The propulsion control arrangement 1 is configured to steer, turn, and navigate the robotic lawnmower 3 by controlling rotation of the first and second drive wheels 9, 9'. The propulsion control arrangement 1 is configured to control rotation of the first and second drive wheels 9, 9' by controlling the power and direction of the respective propulsion motor. The propulsion control arrangement 1 is in some places herein referred to as "the control arrangement 1" for the reason of brevity and clarity.

[0050] Fig. 2 illustrates a first side view of the robotic lawnmower 3 according to the embodiments illustrated in Fig. 1. In Fig. 2, the robotic lawnmower 3 is illustrated as positioned on an inclined ground surface 7. The robotic lawnmower 3 has a first longitudinal direction Id1. The first longitudinal direction Id1 is parallel to a longitudinal axis la of the robotic lawnmower 3. The longitudinal axis la of the robotic lawnmower 3 is parallel to a first plane p1 extending through ground engaging portions of the wheels 5, 5', 9, 9' of the robotic lawnmower 3, i.e. perpendicular to the ground surface 7 in case the robotic lawnmower 3 is positioned onto a flat and planar ground surface 7. In Fig. 2, the first longitudinal direction Id1 is pointing in a direction of forward travel of the robotic lawnmower 3. The direction of forward travel of the robotic lawnmower 3 may also be referred to as a forward direction of the robotic lawnmower 3 and is the direction in which the robotic lawnmower 3 mainly operates during operation of an area. The robotic lawnmower 3 also has a second longitudinal direction Id2. The second longitudinal direction Id2 is opposite to the first longitudinal direction Id1. In Fig. 2, the second longitudinal direction Id2 is pointing in a direction of reverse travel of the robotic lawnmower 3. Accordingly, when the robotic lawnmower 3 is travelling in the first longitudinal direction Id1, the swivel caster wheels 5, 5' will be located in front of the first and second drive wheels 9, 9' seen in the travelling direction, i.e. in the first longitudinal direction Id1. When the robotic lawnmower 3 is travelling in the second longitudinal direction Id2, the first and second drive wheels

9, 9' will be located in front of the swivel caster wheels 5, 5' seen in the travelling direction, i.e. in the second longitudinal direction Id2. According to further embodiments, this may be the other way around, as is further explained herein.

[0051] As indicated in Fig. 2, each swivel caster wheel 5, 5' comprises a swivel caster assembly 10, 12. According to the illustrated embodiments, each swivel caster wheel 5, 5' comprise the same features and functions as the other swivel caster wheel 5, 5'. Therefore, below, reference is made to one of the swivel caster wheels 5, 5', if not indicated otherwise. The swivel caster assembly 10, 12 comprises a journal 10 pivotably attached to the robotic lawnmower 3 around a pivot axis pa. The pivot axis pa is substantially perpendicular to the first plane p1, i.e. perpendicular to the ground surface 7 in case the robotic lawnmower 3 is positioned onto a flat and planar ground surface 7. The swivel caster assembly 10, 12 further comprises a support structure 12 arranged between the journal 10 and a wheel axis aw of the swivel caster wheel 5.

[0052] The swivel caster wheel 5 is pivotally attached to the robotic lawnmower 3 via the support structure 12 and the journal 10. As can be seen in Fig. 2, the pivot axis pa is arranged at a distance from a wheel axle aw of the swivel caster wheel 5 measured in a direction of the first plane p1. The swivel caster wheel 5 is free to pivot around the pivot axis pa 360 degrees such that a rolling direction rd of the swivel caster wheel 5 can follow a travel direction of the robotic lawnmower 3. The rolling direction rd of the swivel caster wheel 5 is perpendicular to the wheel axle aw of the swivel caster wheel 5.

[0053] In Fig. 2, the robotic lawnmower 3 is illustrated as travelling in the first longitudinal direction Id1. As can be seen in Fig. 2, when travelling in the first longitudinal direction Id1, the rolling direction rd of the swivel caster wheel 5 is parallel to the first and second longitudinal directions Id1, Id2 and the wheel axle aw of the swivel caster wheel 5 is behind the pivot axis pa seen in the first longitudinal direction Id1.

[0054] Fig. 3 illustrates a second side view of the robotic lawnmower 3 according to the embodiments illustrated in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2. In Fig. 3, the robotic lawnmower 3 is illustrated as travelling in the second longitudinal direction Id2. As can be seen in Fig. 3, when travelling in the second longitudinal direction Id2, the rolling direction rd of the swivel caster wheel 5 is parallel to the first and second longitudinal directions Id1, Id2 and the wheel axle aw of the swivel caster wheel 5 is behind the pivot axis pa seen in the first longitudinal direction Id1. Since the swivel caster wheel 5 is free to pivot around the pivot axis pa 360 degrees such that the rolling direction rd can follow the travel direction of the robotic lawnmower 3, the swivel caster wheel 5 has a first rotational direction in which it is intended to rotate around the wheel axis aw during operation of the robotic lawnmower 3.

[0055] As realized by the inventor of the present disclosure, problems arise when the robotic lawnmower 3

is to change longitudinal traveling direction, such as from a forward direction of travel to a reverse direction of travel, or from a reverse direction of travel to a forward direction of travel. Such changes in longitudinal travelling direction normally occurs upon stop events, such as when the robotic lawnmower 3 detects a boundary wire or a bumping into an object, as is further explained herein.

[0056] Below, these problems are further explained with reference to Fig. 2 and Fig. 3. In Fig. 2, the robotic lawnmower 3 is illustrated as travelling in the first longitudinal direction Id1. As can be seen in Fig. 2, when travelling in the first longitudinal direction Id1, the rolling direction rd of the swivel caster wheel 5 is parallel to the first and second longitudinal directions Id1, Id2 and the wheel axle aw of the swivel caster wheel 5 is behind the pivot axis pa seen in the first longitudinal direction Id1. Apparently, if the robotic lawnmower 3 stops after travel in the first longitudinal direction Id1 the swivel caster wheel 5 will be in a position as illustrated in Fig. 2.

[0057] If propulsion is initiated in the second longitudinal direction Id2 of the robotic lawnmower 3 when the swivel caster wheel 5 is in this position, the swivel caster wheel 5 will start to rotate around the wheel axle aw in a second rotational direction opposite to the first rotational direction and will start to pivot around the pivot axis pa in an uncontrolled manner. The pivoting direction of the swivel caster wheel 5 is highly random and usually cannot be foreseen. The wheel axle aw of the swivel caster wheel 5 will thus rotate relative to the second longitudinal direction Id2 and at a certain moment, when the wheel axle aw has passed the point in which the wheel axle aw is parallel to the second longitudinal direction Id2, the swivel caster wheel 5 will start to rotate in the first rotational direction. As a result thereof, high forces are transferred to the robotic lawnmower 3 from the ground engaging contact between the ground surface 7 and the swivel caster wheel 5. These high forces result in unexpected changes in travel direction of the robotic lawnmower 3. Moreover, these high forces provide resistance in the second longitudinal direction Id2 of the robotic lawnmower 3 which makes propulsion in the second longitudinal direction Id2 more difficult and therefore increases the risk of wheel slip and impairs the slope performance of the robotic lawnmower 3. The situation gets even worse if the two swivel caster wheels 5, 5' pivots in opposite pivoting directions which can occur in some cases.

[0058] Fig. 4a - Fig. 4d illustrate the robotic lawnmower 3 according to the embodiments illustrated in Fig. 1 - Fig. 3 at four different positions relative to a boundary wire 14. In Fig. 4a, the robotic lawnmower 3 is illustrated as travelling in the first longitudinal direction Id1 towards the boundary wire 14. In Fig. 4b, the robotic lawnmower 3 is illustrated as having reached and stopped at the boundary wire 14. According to the illustrated embodiments, the robotic lawnmower 3 comprises a boundary wire sensor 16 configured to detect the presence of the boundary wire 14, wherein the propulsion control arrangement is configured to stop propulsion of the robotic

lawnmower 3 in case of a detection of a boundary wire 14. The boundary wire sensor 16 may be configured to detect the presence of the boundary wire 14 by sensing a magnetic field of the boundary wire 14. Moreover, according to the illustrated embodiments, the robotic lawnmower 3 comprises an impact sensor 18. The impact sensor 18 is configured to sense the presence of impacts between the robotic lawnmower 3 and objects. The propulsion control arrangement 1 is configured to stop propulsion of the robotic lawnmower 3 in case of a detection of an impact between the robotic lawnmower 3 and an object. The impact sensor 18 may comprise one or more pressure switches, or the like, connected to a bumper, and/or outer chassis component, of the robotic lawnmower 3. The control arrangement 1 may be configured to detect a stop event of the robotic lawnmower 3 using input from the boundary wire sensor 16 and/or the impact sensor 18. As an alternative, or in addition, the control arrangement 1 may be configured to detect a stop event of the robotic lawnmower 3 using input from another type of sensor or another type of device or system.

[0059] According to embodiments of the present disclosure, the control arrangement 1 is configured to, upon detection of a stop event of the robotic lawnmower 3 after travel in a first longitudinal direction $ld1$ of the robotic lawnmower 3, turn the robotic lawnmower 3 a predetermined angle. In Fig. 4c, the robotic lawnmower 3 is illustrated as having been turned the predetermined angle $a1$. As indicated in Fig. 4c, the control arrangement 1 is configured to turn the robotic lawnmower 3 the predetermined angle $a1$ around a yaw axis ay of the robotic lawnmower 3. The control arrangement 1 may be configured to turn the robotic lawnmower 3 the predetermined angle $a1$ by rotating the first and second drive wheels in opposite rotational directions. The control arrangement 1 may then initiate propulsion in a second longitudinal direction $ld2$ of the robotic lawnmower 3, as illustrated in Fig. 4d, being opposite to the first longitudinal direction $ld1$.

[0060] Fig. 5 schematically illustrates a first top view of the swivel caster wheel 5 according to the embodiments illustrated in Fig. 1 - Fig. 3. In Fig. 5, the swivel caster wheel 5 is illustrated in a viewing direction straight towards the ground surface 7, indicated in Fig. 2 and Fig. 3. Moreover, in Fig. 5, the swivel caster wheel 5 is illustrated in a position obtained when the robotic lawnmower 3 is traveling in the first longitudinal direction $ld1$. As can be seen in Fig. 5, when travelling in the first longitudinal direction $ld1$, the rolling direction rd of the swivel caster wheel 5 is parallel to the first and second longitudinal directions $ld1$, $ld2$ and the wheel axle aw of the swivel caster wheel 5 is behind the pivot axis pa seen in the first longitudinal direction $ld1$. Moreover, the distance d between the pivot axis pa and the wheel axle aw in the first longitudinal direction $ld1$ is indicated in Fig. 5.

[0061] When the robotic lawnmower 3 is travelling in the first longitudinal direction $ld1$ towards the boundary wire 14, as illustrated in Fig. 4a, the swivel caster wheel 5 will assume a position as illustrated in Fig. 5. When the

robotic lawnmower 3 stops at the boundary wire, as illustrated in Fig. 4b, the swivel caster wheel 5 will apparently remain in the position as illustrated in Fig. 5. When the control arrangement 1 initiates turning of the robotic lawnmower 3, a torque is obtained onto the swivel caster wheel 5 around the pivot axis pa due to a force obtained from the ground engaging contact of the swivel caster wheel 5 which acts on the support structure 12 of the swivel caster wheel 5.

[0062] Fig. 6 schematically illustrates a second top view of the swivel caster wheel 5 according to the embodiments illustrated in Fig. 1 - Fig. 3. In Fig. 6, the swivel caster wheel 5 is illustrated in a position obtained when the robotic lawnmower 3 has been turned the predetermined angle $a1$. Thus, in Fig. 6, the swivel caster wheel 5 is in a position obtained when the robotic lawnmower 3 is in the position illustrated in Fig. 4c. In Fig. 6, the arrow $ld0$ denotes the previous direction of the first longitudinal direction $ld1$ before the turning of the robotic lawnmower 3 was initiated. As can be seen in Fig. 6, as a result of the turning of the robotic lawnmower 3 the predetermined angle $a1$, the swivel caster wheel 5 has been pivoted around the pivot axis pa such that the rolling direction of the swivel caster wheel 5 is transversal to the first and second longitudinal directions $ld1$, $ld2$ of the robotic lawnmower 3. As explained above, the pivoting of the swivel caster wheel 5 is a result of the torque obtained onto the swivel caster wheel 5 around the pivot axis pa due to the force obtained from the ground engaging contact of the swivel caster wheel 5 which acts on the support structure 12 of the swivel caster wheel 5.

[0063] According to the illustrated embodiments, the predetermined angle $a1$ is approximately 20 degrees. According to further embodiments, the predetermined angle $a1$ may be within the range of 7 degrees to 40 degrees, or within the range of 10 degrees to 30 degrees.

[0064] As can be seen in Fig. 6, the swivel caster wheel 5 has been pivoted an angle which is greater than the predetermined turning angle $a1$ of the robotic lawnmower 3. This is a result of the fact that according to the illustrated embodiments, the distance d between the pivot axis pa and the wheel axle aw of the swivel caster wheel 5 is shorter than the distance between the pivot axis pa of the swivel caster wheel 5 and the yaw axis of the robotic lawnmower 3 measured in the first plane.

[0065] When the swivel caster wheel 5 is in the position illustrated in Fig. 6, the control arrangement can initiate propulsion in the second longitudinal direction $ld2$ and as a result thereof, a torque is obtained onto the swivel caster wheel 5 around the pivot axis pa due to the force obtained from the ground engaging contact of the swivel caster wheel 5 acting on the support structure 12 of the swivel caster wheel 5.

[0066] Fig. 7 schematically illustrates a third top view of the swivel caster wheel 5 according to the embodiments illustrated in Fig. 1 - Fig. 3. In Fig. 7, the swivel caster wheel 5 is illustrated in a position obtained when the robotic lawnmower 3 has travelled a distance in the

second longitudinal direction Id2. Thus, in Fig. 7, the swivel caster wheel 5 is illustrated in a position obtained when the robotic lawnmower 3 is in the position illustrated in Fig. 4d. As can be seen in Fig. 7, the swivel caster wheel 5 has been pivoted around the pivot axis pa such that the rolling direction rd of the swivel caster wheel 5 is parallel to the first and second longitudinal directions Id1, Id2 and the wheel axle aw of the swivel caster wheel 5 is behind the pivot axis pa seen in the first longitudinal direction Id1. When the robotic lawnmower 3 has travelled a distance in the second longitudinal direction Id2, the control arrangement 1 may turn the robotic lawnmower 3 to a random direction and initiate propulsion in the first longitudinal direction Id1.

[0067] Below, simultaneous reference is made to Fig. 1 - Fig. 7. As understood from the above, since the control arrangement 1 is configured to turn the robotic lawnmower 3 the predetermined angle a1 before initiating propulsion in the second longitudinal direction Id2 of the robotic lawnmower 3, the swivel caster wheel 5 is pivoted in a controlled manner around the pivot axis pa. Moreover, when the swivel caster wheel 5 is in the position illustrated in Fig. 7, propulsion can be initiated in the second longitudinal direction Id2 with less resistance in the second longitudinal direction Id2 and with a reduced risk of unexpected changes in travel direction of the robotic lawnmower 3. Moreover, the lower resistance in the second longitudinal direction Id2 reduces the risk of wheel slip of drive wheels 9, 9' of the robotic lawnmower 3, which can reduce wear and tear of an area operated by the robotic lawnmower. Moreover, the controlled turning of the robotic lawnmower 3 and of the swivel caster wheel 5 may reduce the wear and tear obtained from the contact between the ground surface 7 and the swivel caster wheel 5. Furthermore, a control arrangement 1 is provided capable of reducing uneven wear and tear of the area operated by the robotic lawnmower by reducing wear and tear of the ground surface 7 around objects which causes stop events, such as for example trees, stumps, and boundary wires 14.

[0068] Moreover, a control arrangement 1 is provided having conditions for obtaining an improved coverage of an area operated by a robotic lawnmower 3. This because a reduced risk of wheel slip is obtained and a reduced risk of unexpected changes in travel direction of the robotic lawnmower 3 is obtained due to reduced forces transferred to the robotic lawnmower 3 from the contact between the ground surface and the swivel caster wheel 5. Moreover, due to the turning of the robotic lawnmower 3, the swivel caster wheel will be pivoted in a known pivoting direction which further reduces the risk of unexpected changes in travel direction of the robotic lawnmower 3.

[0069] Furthermore, since propulsion can be initiated in the second longitudinal direction Id2 with less resistance in the second longitudinal direction Id2, the slope performance of the robotic lawnmower 3 is improved. As a further result thereof, the control arrangement 1 pro-

vides conditions for increasing the size of an area operated by the robotic lawnmower 3, for example by positioning boundary wires 14 further down in slopes.

[0070] As indicated in Fig. 2 and Fig. 3, according to the illustrated embodiments, the robotic lawnmower 3 comprises a sensor 11 arranged to sense a current inclination angle ai of the robotic lawnmower 3 relative a horizontal plane hp in the first longitudinal direction Id1. The sensor 11 may be configured to sense the orientation of the robotic lawnmower 3 relative to the gravitational field at the location of the robotic lawnmower 3 to thereby sense the current inclination angle ai of the robotic lawnmower 3 relative a horizontal plane hp. According to such embodiments, the sensor 11 may comprise an accelerometer. As an alternative, or in addition, the sensor 11 may be configured to sense angular displacements of the robotic lawnmower 3. According to such embodiments, the sensor 11 may comprise a gyroscope. Moreover, the control arrangement 1 may be arranged to obtain reference values at one or more predetermined locations, such as at a charging dock. According to still further embodiments, the control arrangement 1 may be configured to obtain the current inclination angle ai of the robotic lawnmower 3 by receiving the current inclination angle ai of the robotic lawnmower 3 from an external source, and/or by comparing a current position of the robotic lawnmower 3 and map data comprising inclination data of the area.

[0071] According to the illustrated embodiments, the propulsion control arrangement 1 is configured to turn the robotic lawnmower 3 the predetermined angle a1 only if the current inclination angle ai is greater than a threshold inclination angle. The threshold inclination angle may be within the range of 1.5 degrees to 7 degrees, or is within the range of 2 degrees to 5 degrees. Due to these features, the control arrangement 1 will perform the turning of the robotic lawnmower 3 when it is most needed and in cases where the risk for wheel slip of drive wheels 9, 9' is high. Thus, according to these embodiments, the control arrangement 1 may initiate propulsion in the second longitudinal direction Id2 upon detection of a stop event of the robotic lawnmower 3 after travel in the first longitudinal direction Id1, without turning the robotic lawnmower 3 the predetermined angle a1, if the current inclination angle ai is smaller than the threshold inclination angle.

[0072] The predetermined angle a1, as referred to herein, may not be a fixed angle. Instead, the control arrangement 1 may be configured to determine the angle a1 based on input data, such as for example the current inclination angle ai of the robotic lawnmower 3. According to further embodiments, the predetermined angle a1, as referred to herein, may be an angle a1 set randomly within an angle interval. Even such an angle a1 can be said to be predetermined since the angle a1 is set within an angle interval.

[0073] Fig. 8 illustrates a self-propelled autonomous robotic lawnmower 3, according to some further embod-

iments. According to the illustrated embodiments, the self-propelled robotic lawnmower 3 is a self-propelled autonomous robotic lawnmower 3. According to the embodiments illustrated in Fig. 8, the robotic lawnmower 3 is configured to be used to cut grass in areas used for aesthetic and recreational purposes, such as gardens, parks, city parks, sports fields, lawns around houses, apartments, commercial buildings, offices, and the like. For the reason of brevity and clarity, the self-propelled robotic lawnmower 3 is in some places herein referred to as "the robotic lawnmower 3".

[0074] According to the illustrated embodiments, the robotic lawnmower 3 comprises a first and a second drive wheel 9, 9'. In Fig. 8, only the first drive wheel 9 is visible. Moreover, according to the embodiments illustrated in Fig. 8, the robotic lawnmower 3 comprises one swivel caster wheel 5 configured to abut against a ground surface 7 during operation of the robotic lawnmower 3. The swivel caster wheel 5 is a non-driven wheel configured to support the robotic lawnmower 3 during operation thereof. Thus, according to the illustrated embodiments, the robotic lawnmower 3 comprises three wheels 9, 9', 5. According to the embodiments illustrated in Fig. 8, the robotic lawnmower 3 may be referred to as a three-wheeled front wheel driven robotic lawnmower 3. Thus, according to the embodiments illustrated in Fig. 8, the first and a second drive wheel 9, 9' constitute front wheels and the swivel caster wheels 5 constitute a rear wheel of the robotic lawnmower 3. The first and second drive wheels 9, 9' are driven by a respective propulsion motor which may be powered by electricity from a battery comprised in the robotic lawnmower 3. These propulsion motors and the battery are not illustrated in Fig. 8 for the reason of brevity and clarity.

[0075] In Fig. 8, the first longitudinal direction Id1 is pointing in a direction of forward travel of the robotic lawnmower 3. The robotic lawnmower 3 also has a second longitudinal direction Id2. The second longitudinal direction Id2 is opposite to the first longitudinal direction Id1. In Fig. 8, the second longitudinal direction Id2 is pointing in a direction of reverse travel of the robotic lawnmower 3. Accordingly, when the robotic lawnmower 3 is travelling in the first longitudinal direction Id1, the swivel caster wheels 5, 5' will be behind the first and second drive wheels 9, 9' seen in the travelling direction, i.e. in the first longitudinal direction Id1. When the robotic lawnmower 3 is travelling in the second longitudinal direction Id2, the first and second drive wheels 9, 9' will be behind the swivel caster wheels 5, 5' seen in the travelling direction, i.e. in the second longitudinal direction Id2. According to further embodiments, this may be the other way around, as explained herein. Moreover, the robotic lawnmower 3 may be provided with another number of wheels 5, 9, 9' and another configuration of driven and non-driven wheels than depicted in Fig. 8, as is further explained herein.

[0076] The robotic lawnmower 3 comprises a propulsion control arrangement 1. Moreover, the robotic lawnmower 3

comprises a sensor 11 arranged to sense a current inclination angle of the robotic lawnmower 3. The propulsion control arrangement 1 is configured to steer, turn, and navigate the robotic lawnmower 3 by controlling rotation of the first and second drive wheels 9, 9'. The propulsion control arrangement 1 is configured to control rotation of the first and second drive wheels 9, 9' by controlling the power and direction of the respective propulsion motor. The propulsion control arrangement 1 is in some places herein referred to as "the control arrangement 1" for the reason of brevity and clarity.

[0077] The propulsion control arrangement 1 of the robotic lawnmower 3 according to the embodiments illustrated in Fig. 8 may comprise the same features, functions, and advantages as the control arrangement 1 described with reference to Fig. 1 - Fig. 7. Moreover, the swivel caster wheel 5 and the sensor 11 of the robotic lawnmower 3 according to the embodiments illustrated in Fig. 8 may comprise the same features, functions, and advantages as the swivel caster wheel 5 and the sensor 11 described with reference to Fig. 1 - Fig. 7. Therefore, these components 1, 5, 11 of the robotic lawnmower 3 are not further explained herein.

[0078] Fig. 9 illustrates a method 100 of propelling a self-propelled robotic lawnmower 3. The self-propelled robotic lawnmower may be a self-propelled robotic lawnmower 3 according to the embodiments illustrated in Fig. 1 - Fig. 7, or a self-propelled robotic lawnmower 3 according to the embodiments illustrated in Fig. 8. Therefore, below, simultaneous reference is made to Fig. 1 - Fig. 9. Fig. 9 illustrates a method 100 of propelling a self-propelled robotic lawnmower 3 comprising at least one swivel caster wheel 5, 5' configured to abut against a ground surface 7 during operation of the robotic lawnmower 3, wherein the method 100 comprises the steps of:

- detecting 110 a stop event of the robotic lawnmower 3 after travel in a first longitudinal direction Id1 of the robotic lawnmower 3,
- turning 120 the robotic lawnmower 3 a predetermined angle α_1 to turn the at least one swivel caster wheel 5, 5' to a position in which a respective rolling direction rd of the at least one swivel caster wheel 5, 5' is transversal to a second longitudinal direction Id2 being opposite to the first longitudinal direction Id1, and then
- initiating 130 propulsion in the second longitudinal direction Id2.

[0079] As illustrated in Fig. 9, the method 100 may comprise the steps of:

- determining 112 a current inclination angle α_i of the robotic lawnmower 3, and wherein the method 100 comprises:
- performing 118 the step of turning 120 the robotic lawnmower 3 the predetermined angle α_1 only if the current inclination angle α_i is greater than a threshold

inclination angle.

[0080] According to some embodiments, the threshold inclination angle may be within the range of 1.5 degrees to 7 degrees, or within the range of 2 degrees to 5 degrees.

[0081] It will be appreciated that the various embodiments described for the method 100 are all combinable with the propulsion control arrangement 1 as described herein. That is, the propulsion control arrangement 1 may be configured to perform any one of the method steps 110, 112, 118, 120, and 130 of the method 100.

[0082] Fig. 10 illustrates computer-readable medium 200 comprising instructions which, when executed by a computer, cause the computer to carry out the method 100 according to some embodiments of the present disclosure.

[0083] According to some embodiments, the computer-readable medium 200 comprises a computer program comprising instructions which, when the program is executed by a computer, cause the computer to carry out the method 100 according to some embodiments.

[0084] One skilled in the art will appreciate that the method 100 of propelling a self-propelled robotic lawnmower 3 may be implemented by programmed instructions. These programmed instructions are typically constituted by a computer program, which, when it is executed in the propulsion control arrangement 1, ensures that the propulsion control arrangement 1 carries out the desired control, such as the method steps 110, 112, 118, 120, and 130 described herein. The computer program is usually part of a computer program product 200 which comprises a suitable digital storage medium on which the computer program is stored.

[0085] The propulsion control arrangement 1 may comprise a calculation unit which may take the form of substantially any suitable type of processor circuit or microcomputer, e.g. a circuit for digital signal processing (digital signal processor, DSP), a Central Processing Unit (CPU), a processing unit, a processing circuit, a processor, an Application Specific Integrated Circuit (ASIC), a microprocessor, or other processing logic that may interpret and execute instructions. The herein utilised expression "calculation unit" may represent a processing circuitry comprising a plurality of processing circuits, such as, e.g., any, some or all of the ones mentioned above.

[0086] The propulsion control arrangement 1 may further comprise a memory unit, wherein the calculation unit may be connected to the memory unit, which may provide the calculation unit with, for example, stored program code and/or stored data which the calculation unit may need to enable it to do calculations. The calculation unit may also be adapted to store partial or final results of calculations in the memory unit. The memory unit may comprise a physical device utilised to store data or programs, i.e., sequences of instructions, on a temporary or permanent basis. According to some embodiments, the memory unit may comprise integrated circuits comprising

silicon-based transistors. The memory unit may comprise e.g. a memory card, a flash memory, a USB memory, a hard disc, or another similar volatile or non-volatile storage unit for storing data such as e.g. ROM (Read-Only Memory), PROM (Programmable Read-Only Memory), EPROM (Erasable PROM), EEPROM (Electrically Erasable PROM), etc. in different embodiments.

[0087] The propulsion control arrangement 1 is connected to components of the robotic lawnmower 3 for receiving and/or sending input and output signals. These input and output signals may comprise waveforms, pulses, or other attributes which the input signal receiving devices can detect as information and which can be converted to signals processable by the propulsion control arrangement 1. These signals may then be supplied to the calculation unit. One or more output signal sending devices may be arranged to convert calculation results from the calculation unit to output signals for conveying to other parts of the robotic lawnmowers control system and/or the component or components for which the signals are intended. Each of the connections to the respective components of the robotic lawnmower 3 for receiving and sending input and output signals may take the form of one or more from among a cable, a data bus, e.g. a CAN (controller area network) bus, or some other bus configuration, or a wireless connection.

[0088] In the embodiments illustrated, the robotic lawnmower 3 comprises a propulsion control arrangement 1 but might alternatively be implemented wholly or partly in two or more control arrangements or two or more control units.

[0089] The computer program product 200 may be provided for instance in the form of a data carrier carrying computer program code for performing at least some of the method steps 110, 112, 118, 120, and 130 according to some embodiments when being loaded into one or more calculation units of the propulsion control arrangement 1. The data carrier may be, e.g. a CD ROM disc, as is illustrated in Fig. 10, or a ROM (read-only memory), a PROM (programmable read-only memory), an EPROM (erasable PROM), a flash memory, an EEPROM (electrically erasable PROM), a hard disc, a memory stick, an optical storage device, a magnetic storage device or any other appropriate medium such as a disk or tape that may hold machine readable data in a non-transitory manner. The computer program product may furthermore be provided as computer program code on a server and may be downloaded to the propulsion control arrangement 1 remotely, e.g., over an Internet or an intranet connection, or via other wired or wireless communication systems.

[0090] It is to be understood that the foregoing is illustrative of various example embodiments and that the invention is defined only by the appended claims. A person skilled in the art will realize that the example embodiments may be modified, and that different features of the example embodiments may be combined to create embodiments other than those described herein, without departing from the scope of the present invention, as de-

fined by the appended claims.

[0091] As used herein, the term "comprising" or "comprises" is open-ended, and includes one or more stated features, elements, steps, components, or functions but does not preclude the presence or addition of one or more other features, elements, steps, components, functions, or groups thereof.

Claims

1. A propulsion control arrangement (1) for a self-propelled robotic lawnmower (3),

wherein the robotic lawnmower (3) comprises at least one swivel caster wheel (5, 5') configured to abut against a ground surface (7) during operation of the robotic lawnmower (3),

characterized in that the control arrangement (1) is configured to, upon detection of a stop event of the robotic lawnmower (3) after travel in a first longitudinal direction (ld1) of the robotic lawnmower (3), turn the robotic lawnmower (3) a predetermined angle (a1), and then initiate propulsion in a second longitudinal direction (ld2) of the robotic lawnmower (3) being opposite to the first longitudinal direction (ld1).

2. The control arrangement (1) according to claim 1, wherein the predetermined angle (a1) is within the range of 2 degrees to 40 degrees, or is within the range of 10 degrees to 30 degrees.

3. The control arrangement (1) according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the control arrangement (1) is configured to turn the robotic lawnmower (3) the predetermined angle (a1) around a yaw axis (ay) of the robotic lawnmower (3).

4. The control arrangement (1) according any one of the preceding claims, wherein the control arrangement (1) is configured to determine a current inclination angle (ai) of the robotic lawnmower (3), and is configured to turn the robotic lawnmower (3) the predetermined angle (a1) if the current inclination angle (ai) is greater than a threshold inclination angle.

5. A self-propelled robotic lawnmower (3) comprising:
- at least one swivel caster wheel (5, 5') configured to abut against a ground surface (7) during operation of the robotic lawnmower (3), and
- a propulsion control arrangement (1) according any one of the preceding claims.

6. The robotic lawnmower (3) according to claim 5,

wherein the robotic lawnmower (3) further comprises:

- a first drive wheel (9), and
- a second drive wheel (9'),

and wherein the propulsion control arrangement (1) is configured to control propulsion of the robotic lawnmower (3) by controlling rotation of the first and second drive wheels (9, 9').

7. The robotic lawnmower (3) according to claim 6, wherein the propulsion control arrangement (1) is configured to turn the robotic lawnmower (3) the predetermined angle (a1) by rotating the first and second drive wheels (9, 9') in opposite rotational directions.

8. The robotic lawnmower (3) according to any one of the claims 5-7, wherein the robotic lawnmower (3) comprises a sensor (11) arranged to sense a current inclination angle (ai) of the robotic lawnmower (3), and wherein the propulsion control arrangement (1) is configured to turn the robotic lawnmower (3) the predetermined angle (a1) if the current inclination angle (ai) is greater than a threshold inclination angle.

9. A method (100) of propelling a self-propelled robotic lawnmower (3) comprising at least one swivel caster wheel (5, 5') configured to abut against a ground surface (7) during operation of the robotic lawnmower (3), wherein the method (100) comprises the steps of:

- detecting (110) a stop event of the robotic lawnmower (3) after travel in a first longitudinal direction (ld1) of the robotic lawnmower (3),
- turning (120) the robotic lawnmower (3) a predetermined angle (a1) to turn the at least one swivel caster wheel (5, 5') to a position in which a respective rolling direction (rd) of the at least one swivel caster wheel (5, 5') is transversal to a second longitudinal direction (ld2) being opposite to the first longitudinal direction (ld1), and then
- initiating (130) propulsion in the second longitudinal direction (ld2).

10. The method (100) according to claim 9, wherein the method (100) comprises the steps of:

- determining (112) a current inclination angle (ai) of the robotic lawnmower (3), and wherein the method (100) comprises:
- performing (118) the step of turning (120) the robotic lawnmower (3) the predetermined angle (a1) only if the current inclination angle (ai) is

greater than a threshold inclination angle.

ist als ein Neigungswinkelschwellenwert.

11. The method (100) according to claim 10, wherein the threshold inclination angle is within the range of 1.5 degrees to 7 degrees, or is within the range of 2 degrees to 5 degrees. 5
12. A computer program comprising instructions which, when the program is executed by a computer, cause the computer to carry out the method (100) according to any one of the claims 9-11. 10
13. A computer-readable medium (200) comprising instructions which, when executed by a computer, cause the computer to carry out the method (100) according to any one of the claims 9 - 11. 15

Patentansprüche

1. Antriebssteuerungsanordnung (1) für einen selbstfahrenden Rasenmäherroboter (3), 20

wobei der Rasenmäherroboter (3) mindestens eine Lenkrolle (5, 5') umfasst, die dazu ausgelegt ist, während des Betriebs des Rasenmäherroboters (3) an einer Bodenfläche (7) anzuliegen, 25

dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass die Steuerungsanordnung (1) dazu ausgelegt ist, beim Erfassen eines Stoppereignisses des Rasenmäherroboters (3) nach dem Verfahren in eine erste Längsrichtung (ld1) des Rasenmäherroboters (3) den Rasenmäherroboter (3) in einem festgelegten Winkel (a1) zu drehen und anschließend den Antrieb in eine zweite Längsrichtung (ld2) des Rasenmäherroboters (3), die der ersten Längsrichtung (ld1) entgegengesetzt ist, zu starten. 30

2. Steuerungsanordnung (1) nach Anspruch 1, wobei der festgelegte Winkel (a1) innerhalb des Bereichs von 2 Grad bis 40 Grad liegt oder innerhalb des Bereichs von 10 Grad bis 30 Grad liegt. 35

3. Steuerungsanordnung (1) nach Anspruch 1 oder 2, wobei die Steuerungsanordnung (1) dazu ausgelegt ist, den Rasenmäherroboter (3) in dem festgelegten Winkel (a1) um eine Gierachse (ay) des Rasenmäherroboters (3) zu drehen. 40

4. Steuerungsanordnung (1) nach einem der vorstehenden Ansprüche, wobei die Steuerungsanordnung (1) dazu ausgelegt ist, einen aktuellen Neigungswinkel (ai) des Rasenmäherroboters (3) zu bestimmen, und dazu ausgelegt ist, den Rasenmäherroboter (3) in dem festgelegten Winkel (a1) zu drehen, wenn der aktuelle Neigungswinkel (ai) größer 45

5. Selbstfahrender Rasenmäherroboter (3), Folgendes umfassend:

- mindestens eine Lenkrolle (5, 5'), die dazu ausgelegt ist, während des Betriebs des Rasenmäherroboters (3) an einer Bodenfläche (7) anzuliegen, und
- eine Antriebssteuerungsanordnung (1) nach einem der vorstehenden Ansprüche.

6. Rasenmäherroboter (3) nach Anspruch 5, wobei der Rasenmäherroboter (3) ferner Folgendes umfasst:

- ein erstes Antriebsrad (9) und
- ein zweites Antriebsrad (9')

und wobei die Antriebssteuerungsanordnung (1) dazu ausgelegt ist, den Antrieb des Rasenmäherroboters (3) durch Steuern der Drehung des ersten und zweiten Antriebsrads (9, 9') zu steuern. 20

7. Rasenmäherroboter (3) nach Anspruch 6, wobei die Antriebssteuerungsanordnung (1) dazu ausgelegt ist, den Rasenmäherroboter (3) durch Drehen des ersten und zweiten Antriebsrads (9, 9') in entgegengesetzte Drehrichtungen in dem festgelegten Winkel (a1) zu drehen. 25

8. Rasenmäherroboter (3) nach einem der Ansprüche 5-7, wobei der Rasenmäherroboter (3) einen Sensor (11) umfasst, der dazu angeordnet ist, einen aktuellen Neigungswinkel (ai) des Rasenmäherroboters (3) zu erfassen, und wobei die Antriebssteuerungsanordnung (1) dazu ausgelegt ist, den Rasenmäherroboter (3) in dem festgelegten Winkel (a1) zu drehen, wenn der aktuelle Neigungswinkel (ai) größer ist als ein Neigungswinkelschwellenwert. 30

9. Verfahren (100) zum Antreiben eines selbstfahrenden Rasenmäherroboters (3), umfassend mindestens eine Lenkrolle (5, 5'), die dazu ausgelegt ist, während des Betriebs des Rasenmäherroboters (3) an einer Bodenfläche (7) anzuliegen, wobei das Verfahren (100) die folgenden Schritte umfasst: 35

- Erfassen (110) eines Stoppereignisses des Rasenmäherroboters (3) nach dem Verfahren in eine erste Längsrichtung (ld1) des Rasenmäherroboters (3),
- Drehen (120) des Rasenmäherroboters (3) in einem festgelegten Winkel (a1), um die mindestens eine Lenkrolle (5, 5') zu einer Position zu drehen, in der eine jeweilige Rollrichtung (rd) der mindestens einen Lenkrolle (5, 5') quer zu einer zweiten Längsrichtung (ld2) verläuft, die der ersten Längsrichtung (ld1) entgegengesetzt 40

ist, und anschließend

- Starten (130) des Antriebs in die zweite Längsrichtung (ld2).

10. Verfahren (100) nach Anspruch 9, wobei das Verfahren (100) die folgenden Schritte umfasst:

- Bestimmen (112) eines aktuellen Neigungswinkels (ai) des Rasenmäherroboters (3), und wobei das Verfahren (100) Folgendes umfasst:
- Ausführen (118) des Schritts des Drehens (120) des Rasenmäherroboters (3) in einem festgelegten Winkel (a1), wenn der aktuelle Neigungswinkel (ai) größer ist als ein Neigungswinkelschwellenwert.

11. Verfahren (100) nach Anspruch 10, wobei der Neigungsschwellenwert innerhalb des Bereichs von 1,5 Grad bis 7 Grad liegt oder innerhalb des Bereichs von 2 Grad bis 5 Grad liegt.

12. Computerprogramm, umfassend Anweisungen, die, wenn das Programm von einem Computer ausgeführt wird, bewirken, dass der Computer das Verfahren (100) nach einem der Ansprüche 9-11 ausführt.

13. Computerlesbares Medium (200), umfassend Anweisungen, die, wenn sie von einem Computer ausgeführt werden, bewirken, dass der Computer das Verfahren (100) nach einem der Ansprüche 9-11 ausführt.

Revendications

1. Agencement de contrôle de propulsion (1) pour une tondeuse à gazon robotique autopropulsée (3),
la tondeuse à gazon robotique (3) comprenant au moins une roulette pivotante (5, 5') conçue pour appuyer contre une surface du sol (7) pendant le fonctionnement de la tondeuse à gazon robotique (3),
caractérisé en ce que l'agencement de contrôle (1) est conçu pour, lors de la détection d'un événement d'arrêt de la tondeuse à gazon robotique (3) après un déplacement dans une première direction longitudinale (ld1) de la tondeuse à gazon robotique (3), faire tourner la tondeuse à gazon robotique (3) d'un angle prédéfini (a1),
puis lancer la propulsion dans une seconde direction longitudinale (ld2) de la tondeuse à gazon robotique (3) opposée à la première direction longitudinale (ld1).
2. Agencement de contrôle (1) selon la revendication 1, l'angle prédéfini (a1) étant compris entre 2 et 40

degrés, ou entre 10 et 30 degrés.

3. Agencement de contrôle (1) selon la revendication 1 ou 2, l'agencement de contrôle (1) étant conçu pour faire tourner la tondeuse à gazon robotique (3) à l'angle prédéfini (a1) autour d'un axe de lacet (ay) de la tondeuse à gazon robotique (3).

4. Agencement de contrôle (1) selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, l'agencement de contrôle (1) étant conçu pour déterminer un angle d'inclinaison actuel (ai) de la tondeuse à gazon robotique (3), et étant conçu pour faire tourner la tondeuse à gazon robotique (3) à l'angle prédéfini (a1) si l'angle d'inclinaison actuel (ai) est supérieur à un angle d'inclinaison seuil.

5. Tondeuse à gazon robotique autopropulsée (3) comprenant :

au moins une roulette pivotante (5, 5') conçue pour appuyer contre une surface du sol (7) pendant le fonctionnement de la tondeuse à gazon robotique (3), et
un agencement de contrôle de propulsion (1) selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes.

6. Tondeuse à gazon robotique (3) selon la revendication 5, la tondeuse à gazon robotique (3) comprenant en outre :

une première roulette motrice (9), et
une seconde roulette motrice (9'),
et l'agencement de contrôle de propulsion (1) étant conçu pour contrôler la propulsion de la tondeuse à gazon robotique (3) en contrôlant la rotation des première et seconde roulettes motrices (9, 9').

7. Tondeuse à gazon robotique (3) selon la revendication 6, l'agencement de contrôle de propulsion (1) étant conçu pour faire tourner la tondeuse à gazon robotique (3) à l'angle prédéfini (a1) en faisant tourner les première et seconde roulettes motrices (9, 9') dans des sens de rotation opposés.

8. Tondeuse à gazon robotique (3) selon l'une quelconque des revendications 5 à 7, la tondeuse à gazon robotique (3) comprenant un capteur (11) conçu pour détecter un angle d'inclinaison actuel (ai) de la tondeuse à gazon robotique (3), et l'agencement de contrôle de propulsion (1) étant conçu pour faire tourner la tondeuse à gazon robotique (3) de l'angle prédéfini (a1) si l'angle d'inclinaison actuel (ai) est supérieur à un angle d'inclinaison seuil.

9. Procédé (100) de propulsion d'une tondeuse à ga-

zon robotique autopropulsée (3) comprenant au moins une roulette pivotante (5, 5') conçue pour appuyer contre une surface du sol (7) pendant le fonctionnement de la tondeuse à gazon robotique (3), le procédé (100) comprenant les étapes consistant à :

détecter (110) un événement d'arrêt de la tondeuse à gazon robotique (3) après un déplacement dans une première direction longitudinale (ld1) de la tondeuse à gazon robotique (3),
faire tourner (120) la tondeuse à gazon robotique (3) d'un angle prédéfini (a1) pour faire tourner l'au moins une roulette pivotante (5, 5') dans une position dans laquelle une direction de roulement (rd) respective de l'au moins une roulette pivotante (5, 5') est transversale à une seconde direction longitudinale (ld2) opposée à la première direction longitudinale (ld1), puis lancer (130) la propulsion dans la seconde direction longitudinale (ld2).

10. Procédé (100) selon la revendication 9, le procédé (100) comprenant l'étape consistant à :
déterminer (112) un angle d'inclinaison actuel (ai) de la tondeuse à gazon robotique (3), et le procédé (100) comprenant l'étape consistant à :
exécuter (118) l'étape consistant à faire tourner (120) la tondeuse à gazon robotique (3) de l'angle prédéfini (a1) uniquement si l'angle d'inclinaison actuel (ai) est supérieur à un angle d'inclinaison seuil.
11. Procédé (100) selon la revendication 10, l'angle d'inclinaison seuil étant dans la plage comprise entre 1,5 et 7 degrés, ou étant dans la plage comprise entre 2 et 5 degrés.
12. Programme informatique comprenant des instructions qui, lorsque le programme est exécuté par un ordinateur, amènent l'ordinateur à effectuer le procédé (100) selon l'une quelconque des revendications 9 à 11.
13. Support lisible par ordinateur (200) comprenant des instructions qui, lorsqu'elles sont exécutées par un ordinateur, amènent l'ordinateur à effectuer le procédé (100) selon l'une quelconque des revendications 9 à 11.

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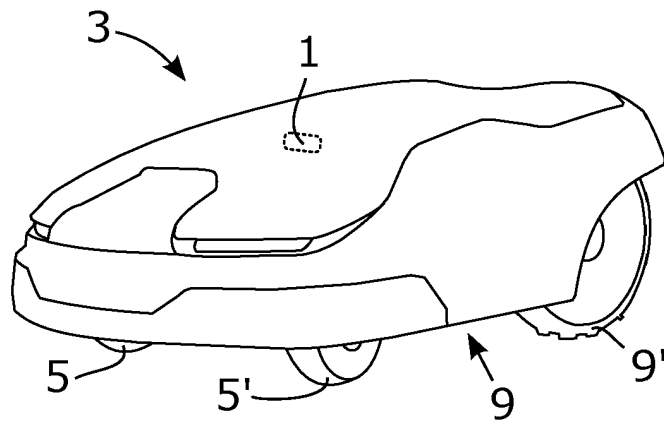


Fig. 1

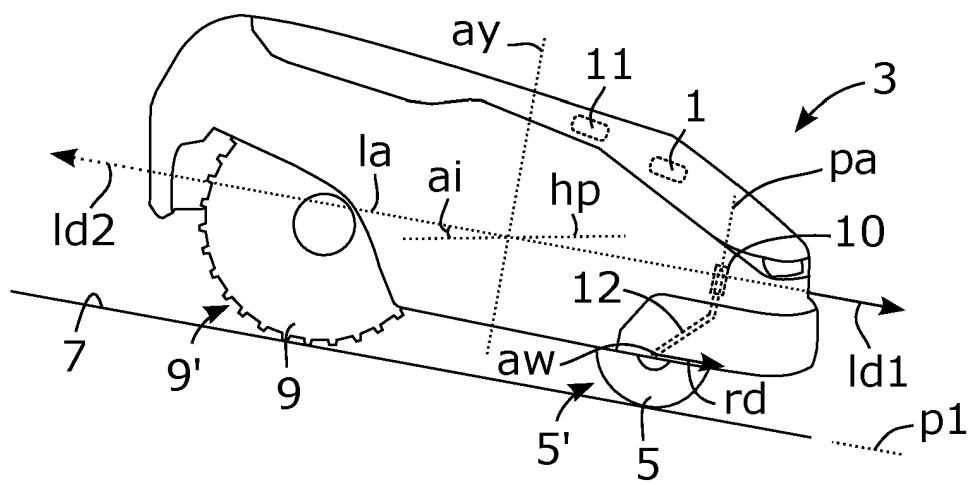


Fig. 2

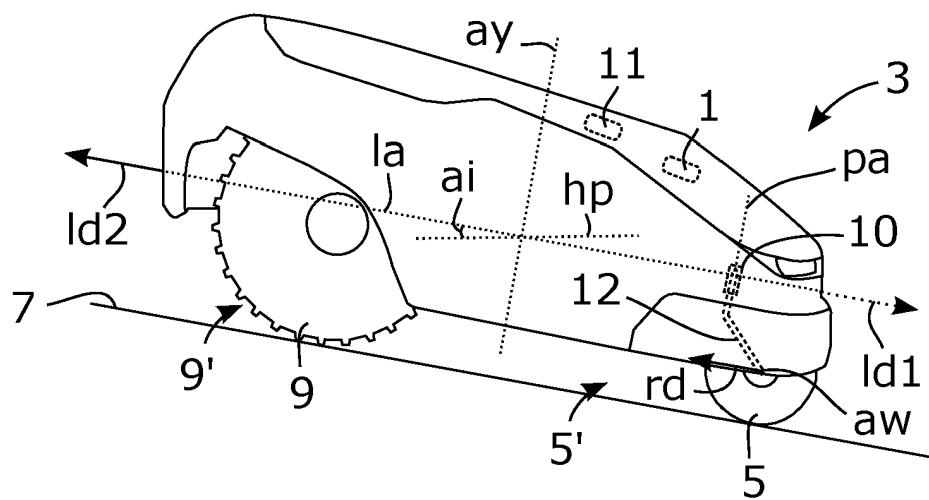
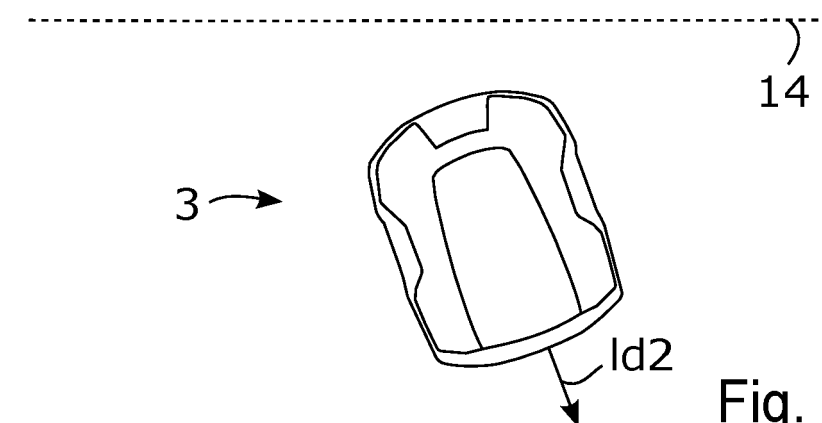
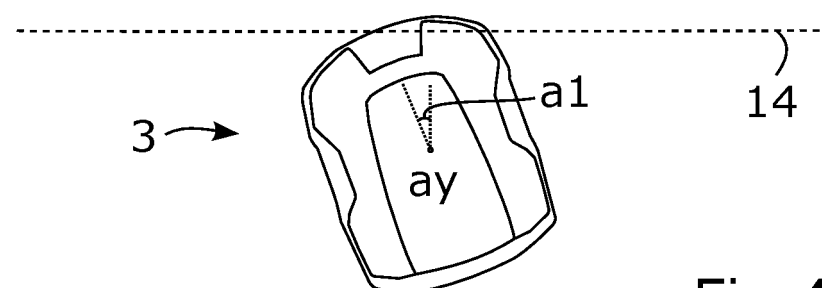
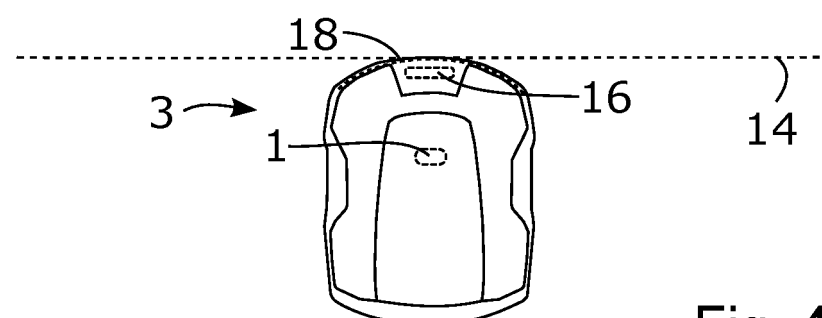
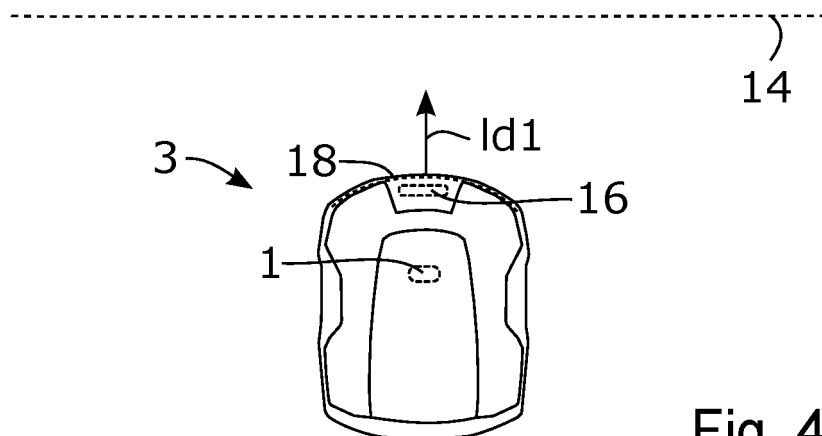


Fig. 3



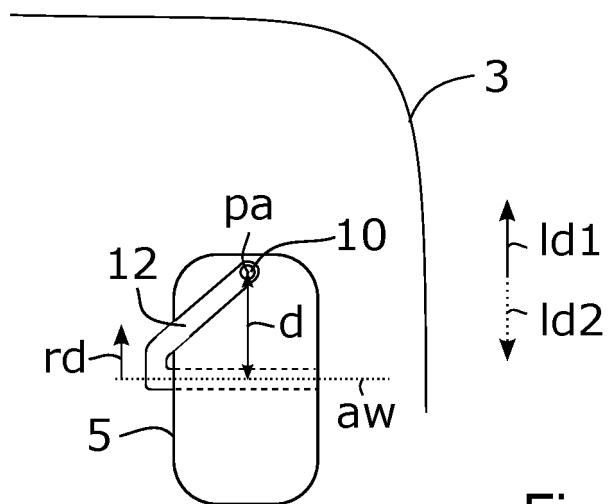


Fig. 5

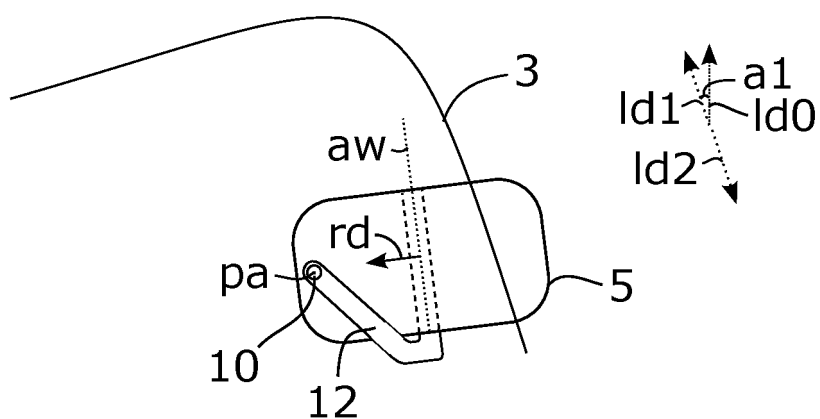


Fig. 6

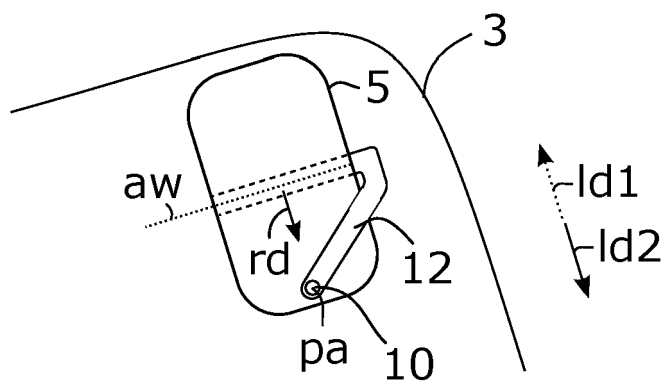


Fig. 7

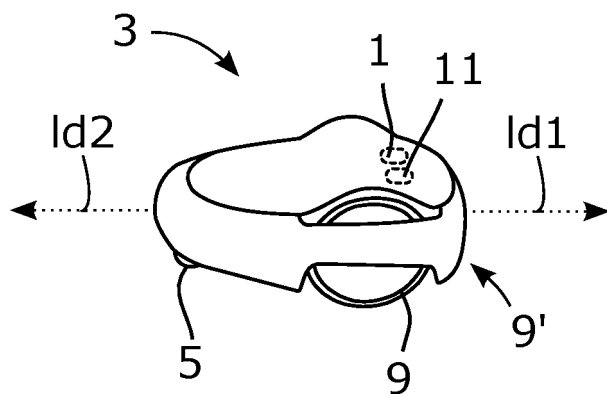


Fig. 8

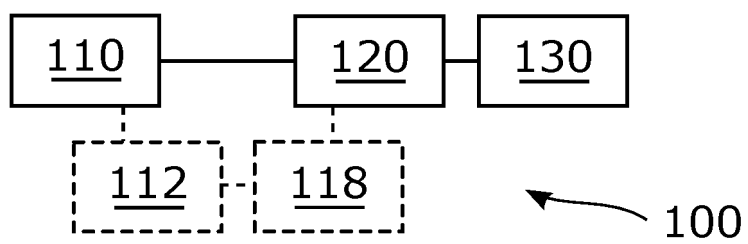


Fig. 9

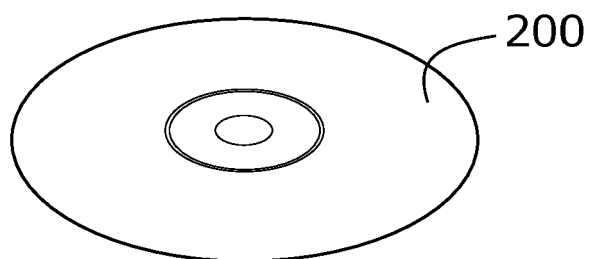


Fig. 10

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

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